United Nations A/S-27/4

General Assembly

Distr.: General
15 June 2001

Original: English

Twenty-seventh special session

Letter dated 11 June 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the African Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the Pan-African Forum on the Future of the Children, which was held in Cairo, from 28 to 31 May 2001.

I would be grateful if this letter and its annex could be issued as a document of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children.

(*Signed*) Ahmed **Aboul Gheit**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

01-41630 (E) 190701

Annex to the letter dated 11 June 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic, English and French]

Pan-African Forum on the Future of Children
28-31 May 2001
Cairo, Egypt

Pan-African Forum for Children
Africa Fit for Children

The African common position as Africa's contribution to the special session of the General Assembly on children

Declaration and Plan of Action

I. Preamble

1. We, the participants in the Pan-African Forum on the Future of Children, meeting in Cairo, Egypt, from 28 to 31 May 2001, within the framework of the Organization of African Unity Council of Ministers decision CM/Dec.542 (LXXII) endorsed by the thirty-sixth ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), mandating the OAU secretariat to develop an African common position, in consultation with member States, and relevant African and international institutions as well as the civil society organizations to be tabled before the special session of the General Assembly on children in September 2001.

2. We acknowledge and affirm that it is the responsibility of African Governments, citizens, families, civil society, regional and subregional organizations and the international community to ensure that children in Africa realize their full range of rights.

3. We are cognizant of the various OAU and non-OAU declarations, decisions and recommendations relating to children, in particular:

- The Bamako Initiative on Child Survival, Development and Universal Immunization in Africa, and on the Programme of Essential Medicines for Children and Their Mothers (1989);
- The Consensus of Dakar (1992);
- Declaration AHG/Decl.1 (XXX) on AIDS and the Child in Africa (1994);
- The Tunis Declaration on the Follow-up of the Mid-Decade Goals for the Child (1995);
- Resolution AHG/Res.251 (XXXII) declaring the period 1997 to 2006 the Decade of Education in Africa (1996);
- The Common Position and Plan of Action and Strategies to support HIV/AIDS Orphans, Vulnerable Children and Children infected by HIV/AIDS 2000;

- Conference of Parliamentarians from Maghreb and West and Central Africa for the "Global Movement for Children";
- The Abuja Declaration and Plan of Action on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Other Related Infectious Diseases (April 2001);
- Bamako Declaration "Vision 2010" on the Reduction of Maternal and Neo-Natal Mortality (May 2001);
- The Kigali Declaration on Children and HIV/AIDS Prevention (May 2001);
- Third Summit of African First Ladies for Peace and Humanitarian Issues, Libreville, Gabon (May 2001).

4. More than 10 years after the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted and subsequently came into force, and almost two years after the entry into force of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, we reaffirm our full commitment to the obligations enshrined in these instruments. The challenge is to transform the State obligation, solemnly entered into through the collective act of acceding to these instruments, to the practical realization of the rights of the child in Africa.

5. We strongly believe that the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child provide the basis for action in favour of children. All the rights contained therein are indivisible and must equally be respected and realized.

II. Basic principles

6. The challenge now is to reaffirm our commitment to ensure that the goals of today are met. We recognize that the future of Africa lies with the well-being of its children and youth. The prospect for the socio-economic transformation of the continent rests with investing in the young people of the continent. **Today's investment in children is tomorrow's peace, stability, security, democracy and sustainable development**. We acknowledge that African children and youth represent more than half of the continent's population, But their views have not been sought concerning the pressing social, economic and human rights issues that directly affect them. **Africa's young voices must not be ignored; they must be heard**.

7. We affirm that responding to the needs of Africa's children is an imperative. Children should be at the core of priorities for policy makers. **Africa's children are indispensable actors for the present and future of our continent**.

8. We note that Africa's children in many ways are the most disadvantaged in the world. Their lives are often too short and their life-chances are too limited. They are exposed to violence and HIV/AIDS infection; they are deprived of education; they are vulnerable to malnutrition and disease. The special needs and demands of Africa's children and youth require focused attention now and in the coming years. **Africa's children need full support and commitment and they need it now**.

9. We note further that Africa's youth are facing a future affected by violence and poverty, and all-too-often foreshortened by HIV/AIDS, malaria and other pandemics. We also note that natural and man-made disasters as well as the negative

impact of external debt servicing, globalization and trade liberalization have added to the plight of Africa's children. Youth has been overlooked in national and international action and policy-making, and the links between children and youth have been too long neglected. But the energy and commitment of youth represent a formidable force for positive change. They will determine which direction Africa takes in the coming decades. **The children and the youth are our greatest untapped resource**.

10. We reaffirm that children have a right to enjoy a healthy environment for the realization of their physical, mental and spiritual well-being. Equally they have a duty to participate in activities that rehabilitate or protect the environment.

11. We are deeply concerned that Africa continues to be plagued by war and armed conflicts which have an enormous and disproportionate negative impact on the civilian population, particularly children and women, a situation in which the human rights of children can never be fully realized.

12. We reaffirm Africa's commitments to peaceful coexistence and the settlement of disputes through negotiations, dialogue and reconciliation as an essential condition for the creation of a child and youth friendly and conducive environment for the protection, survival, growth and development of children and youth.

13. We admit that although some progress has been achieved, the record of the last 11 years is still unsatisfactory. Overall, Africa's children have lost another decade, and with the foreseen but unprevented tragedy of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, Africa stands in danger of losing a generation. This record compels us to recognize our neglect of basic obligations, and challenges us to adopt alternative paradigms for tomorrow. We cannot afford to give up on another decade of African children and youth. **Africa's children need to enjoy their rights to health, education and training now. At the same time, they must assume their responsibilities**.

14. We submit that the special needs of Africa's children have to date not been adequately reflected in international policies and programmes. Africa's children and youth need and demand a special place in all policy-making structures and in the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly on children. This Forum is intended to articulate those special needs: its recommendations must be specific and relevant to Africa. **The concerns of children and youth in Africa must be at the centre of the global agenda**.

15. We stress that responsibility for realizing the rights of the child falls at all levels, children, youth, on families, on communities, on civil society, on the private sector, on national Governments, on subregional and regional organizations, and on the international community. **The agenda of "Africa Fit for Children" must ignite real commitment, sustained resolve and concrete action**.

16. More than 10 years after the historic World Summit for Children, and the adoption of the World Declaration and the Plan of Action that set specific goals for child rights and welfare to be met by 2000, we are in a position to evaluate progress (see annex). Much has been achieved, but many promises and aspirations remain to be met. Some of the shortcomings have arisen from external factors, while others are our own responsibility.

17. We reaffirm the principle of the universality of the rights of children within the framework of positive cultural diversity.

III. "Africa Fit for Children": the way forward

18. In the light of the above, we solemnly urge Heads of State and Government to reaffirm their previous commitments to African children and solemnly commit themselves further to the following:

(a) A vision for Africa's future;

(b) Firm commitment to visionary — but realistic and achievable — goals;

(c) Clear and realistic plan of action with workable steps and clear timetables;

(d) Establishment of a true partnership for joint action between African Governments, civil society, youth and children, families and communities and the international community;

(e) Widespread and meaningful participation of youth and children in the planning, implementation and monitoring of these undertakings;

(f) Quality leadership practising transparency and accountability in favour of a rights-based policy in the interest of children and youth.

19. **We also urge Heads of State and Government to commit themselves to a clear vision for Africa's future**. Africa's children and youth are its present and its future. If Africa is to play a meaningful role in the twenty-first century, African countries must invest in Africa's children and youth. It is essential that the provisions of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child are treated as State obligations, in the framework of a rights-based approach to child survival and development. There is urgent need to provide a peaceful enabling environment for the achievement of these rights through the establishment of appropriate structures for implementation and monitoring. It is also essential that youth are fully included in these obligations.

20. We request our Governments to put in place a programme that encapsulates the vision of children and youth themselves. The participation of children and youth in setting goals and policies over the last 11 years has been insufficient for us to be able to accurately reflect the vision of Africa's youth and children in any document written in 2001. We acknowledge that a vision for Africa's future is a continent in which, by 2010, the following objectives will have been achieved:

(a) Young people confidently expect to live longer and healthier lives than their parents, with increased life chances;

(b) African children and youth are able to achieve personal and collective development in a context that reflects their culture;

(c) Young Africans believe, with good reason, that the future of their communities, countries and continent, is in their hands.

21. These points reflect the very important truth that confidence in the future is the foundation for progressive social change. In seeking to build Africa Fit for Children, we must continue to respect human dignity amid the statistical indicators of progress.

22. **African countries must commit themselves to realistic and achievable goals**. The goals laid out in the 1990 World Summit for Children World Declaration

are yet to be achieved along with others subsequently adopted. Today we must recommit ourselves to the following indispensable obligations:

(a) Non-AIDS-related child mortality rates should be reduced to the levels affirmed in the 1990 World Declaration;

(b) Mother-to-child transmission of HIV should be reduced by 25 per cent by 2005;

(c) The incidence of HIV in young people aged 15-24 should be reduce by 25 per cent by 2005;

(d) HIV/AIDS prevention and information services should reach 90 per cent of youths by 2003;

(e) Universal primary education and early childhood care and development in gender and in the treatment of children with special needs, should be achieved by 2010 and gender disparities in education should be eliminated;

(f) Exclusive breastfeeding up to six months of age and continued breastfeeding with appropriate complementary feeding up to two years and beyond should be promoted, protected and supported. All counties should implement the Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes;

(g) The eradication of poliomyelitis by 2005 should be achieved;

(h) Infant and child mortality due to vaccine-preventable diseases, malaria and diarrhoea and other child killers should be reduced by 50 per cent by 2005;

(i) Ensure implementation of effective family planning programmes;

(j) There should be full protection for children in situations of armed conflict and children under foreign occupation including demobilization of all combatants aged under 18;

(k) Every child should be immediately protected from violence, neglect, sexual exploitation and trafficking;

(l) Measures including the revision of legal codes and procedures to enable children to give evidence in an appropriate way, the development of child-friendly police and courts and the facilitation of social action litigation in favour of children should be under way in all countries by 2010.

23. Fulfilling the above requires a range of actions to mobilize resources, both financial and human. Achieving the goals laid out above will require increased effort and commitment, from a wide range of stakeholders including governments, civil society, the media, the private sector and the international community. All have responsibilities towards Africa's children, to realize the rights enshrined in international instruments. Africa's children deserve as much as children elsewhere in the world.

Plan of Action

I. Overall framework

24. The Plan of Action is aimed at realizing the rights of the child in Africa by means of meeting the goals laid down in the framework, "Africa Fit for Children". At a continental level, the Plan of Action is primarily a set of guidelines for national plans of action, supplemented by regional mechanisms for partnership and monitoring.

25. **We call for clear and realistic national plans of action**. At a national level, every plan of action must have clear steps and timetables for all partners. These must reflect the diverse capacities of African governments and other stakeholders, and the uneven quality of international development cooperation. The Plan of Action should be country-specific, conceived, planned and agreed by stakeholders in each country, in line with the agreed goal of realizing the rights of the child.

26. The Plan of Action prioritizes children and youth. Any effective action depends upon resource allocation, domestically and internationally. Both the quality and quantity of available resources are important.

(a) National planning and international development cooperation should reflect the **prioritization of early childhood and youth;**

(b) Children and youth should be the **first to benefit** from resource mobilization;

(c) Children should **never be left behind**. Policy-makers should ensure that programmes for children and youth are protected from austerity measures or assistance cutbacks;

(d) **Education is non-negotiable.** Free and compulsory basic education is a responsibility that should be shouldered by all and provided free of any conditionality;

(e) Special additional resources should be mobilized for HIV/AIDS programmes including those targeted at youth and at minimizing mother-to-child transmission. For Africa's young people, **HIV/AIDS is the number one survival issue**;

(f) **Action is required at all levels**, from the family to the international level.

II. Enhancing life chances

27. We urge our Governments to take measures to ensure that every child in Africa has a good start in life, and to grow and develop in child friendly, nurturing environment of love, acceptance, peace, security and dignity. To achieve this, the following activities should be done:

(a) Provide assistance and protection of family units and the extended family system;

(b) Ensure proper growth and development of children through provision of education, and information to families, caregivers and the community on health, early childhood care and development services, and nutrition;

(c) Intensify immunization programmes to meet the set goals on immunization. Expand national immunization days to include services for mothers to allow them to take care of their own health together with that of the children;

(d) Increased national budgetary allocation to the health sector particularly to the primary health care sector. Governments shall commit themselves to mobilize domestic and external resources, including sensitizing communities to establish special health funds in order to restore the weak or collapsed health services in their respective countries;

(e) Expand primary health care to include reproductive health services, safe delivery units and antenatal and postnatal care and focus on reduction of maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity. Develop new training programmes for primary health care providers in order to make these services possible;

(f) Integrate programmes for HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, hepatitis and other infectious diseases in primary health care services, in particular the prevention of mother-to-child HIV/AIDS transmission;

(g) Implement the 2000 Abuja Declaration and Plan of Action on Roll-Back Malaria and observe 25 April of each year as Africa Malaria Control Day;

(h) Ensure food security of families and communities, give education and information on timely and appropriate complementary feeding and improve health care services to reduce malnutrition. Promote community-based strategies that help in monitoring the nutritional status of women and children;

(i) Strengthen measures to eliminate iodine deficiency disorders by the year 2005, vitamin A deficiency disorders and anaemia by the year 2010;

(j) Strengthen measures to increase access to safe water and improve sanitation. Promote hygiene education in schools and in the community. Involve women in the planning, installing and managing of water and sanitation systems;

(k) Prepare a code of ethics governing the behaviour and attitudes within families and the society.

III. Overcoming HIV/AIDS

28. Africa must overcome HIV/AIDS in order to fulfil children's rights to survival and development, thus special efforts should be made to:

(a) Resort to all available means including ethical, moral and traditional values to prevent HIV/AIDS;

(b) Improve access to programmes for prevention of mother-to-child HIV/AIDS transmissions, increase access to care, support and treatment for infected mothers and their children and share identified best practices on how to reduce transmission;

(c) Support community initiatives to help families and communities cope with HIV/AIDS and establish mechanisms for alternative care for children orphaned

by AIDS and other vulnerable children. Enact relevant legislation to protect the rights of people affected by HIV/AIDS including orphans and widows;

(d) Strengthen information, education and communication for and with children and youth to increase awareness on HIV/AIDS, to foster positive attitudes towards those affected and reduce stigmatization and exclusion;

(e) Promote holistic health care services, in particular, improve access to reproductive health information, counselling and voluntary testing services for HIV/AIDS. Involve children and youth in developing and implementing programmes aimed at changing high-risk behaviour among young people. Introduce sexuality education in school curricula and include programmes on HIV/AIDS prevention;

(f) Enact and utilize appropriate legislation and international trade regulations to ensure availability of drugs including anti-retroviral drugs at affordable prices, production of pertinent pharmaceuticals and technologies for the care and treatment of those affected by HIV/AIDS;

(g) Enact legislation, where necessary, to ensure that there is no discrimination in school or the workplace against children and young people living with HIV/AIDS;

(h) Establish a multisectoral national policy on the impact of HIV/AIDS on child development and involve all stakeholders;

(i) Ensure that children affected by conflicts including refugee and internally displaced children are included in HIV/AIDS prevention and response programmes and that such programmes are viewed as an essential component of all humanitarian relief and assistance.

IV. Realizing the right to education

29. Education is a basic right that allows every child to develop to her or his fullest potential. To ensure the full realization of this right, Governments should:

(a) Rededicate themselves to the realization of the OAU Education Decade goals and ensure coordination on regional economic communities for the effective implementation of the goals;

(b) Commit themselves to the provision of quality, free and compulsory basic education. Governments must mobilize international donor community and financial institutions including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to commit themselves to support this goal;

(c) Create partnerships with non-formal providers, civil society organizations and the community in order to achieve the goal of free and universal education;

(d) Urgently address the challenge of providing relevant education tailored to national social and economic needs, current level of development while taking into account the forces of globalization;

(e) Draw lessons from new models of education like the "new basic school" movement now becoming common in the West African States, which focus on skills

and learning related to local culture and moral values, teaching in local language, as well as to civic education;

(f) Take into account national needs, local realities, indigenous languages and knowledge, special learning needs of children, children in need of special measures, girls, and children from nomadic communities, in curriculum development and in delivery of education;

(g) Strengthen and involve communities in the mobilization of resources, management of schools, reconsider staffing in view of the toll HIV/AIDS has in the education system, review remuneration for teachers and ensure continuous teacher education;

(h) Strengthen the teaching of science and the utilization of the new information and technologies, as well as innovative teaching and learning approaches and methods;

(i) Eliminate gender disparities in education by taking special measures to increase girls' access to schools, improve their participation and retention rates;

(j) Strengthen vocational training programmes, introduce life skills and create other training opportunities for adolescents so as to gain employable skills and for self-development;

(k) Ensure the integration of peace education, democracy, human rights, humanitarian law, sexuality education, health education and environmental protection in the education system;

(l) Genocide being a crime against humanity, the education of genocide orphaned children should constitute mankind's concern. To this end, the United Nations through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), should contribute to the financing of education of these children in countries where they exist.

V. Realizing the right to protection

30. **Protection of children in situations of armed conflict and under foreign occupation** is a special imperative. Children caught up in armed conflicts shall be given increased care and protection in order to reduce the devastating impacts of war. Special measures shall be taken to:

(a) Stop the use of children as soldiers, demobilize all combatants aged under 18 and develop and implement programmes for their rehabilitation and social reintegration;

(b) Protect former child soldiers from retribution, summary executions, arbitrary detention, torture and other punitive actions by using the provisions in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

(c) Protect children from abduction and stop their use as slaves;

(d) Curb the illicit trade on small arms and light weapons at the national and international levels. Create partnerships with civil society in preventing illicitly acquired arms, and in awareness raising as well as in monitoring government policy;

(e) Ensure special protection and access to humanitarian aid and programmes for refugee children, traumatized children, internally displaced children and children in post-conflict situations;

(f) Eliminate the threat posed by landmines and other unexploded ordnance by ensuring respect for the Ottawa Convention by all States parties, developing programmes for mine clearance and survivor rehabilitation programmes in consultation with the affected communities and the military;

(g) Ensure that member States reaffirm their commitment to international humanitarian law, and those States which have not signed and ratified the following conventions are encouraged to do as soon as possible, as a further measure for protecting children:

- The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child;
- The optional protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict;
- The optional protocol on child prostitution and pornography;
- The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction;
- The Geneva Conventions of 1949 and its two additional protocols of 1977;

(h) Encourage member States to ratify/accede to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court as a step towards prosecution of perpetrators of war crimes and to end impunity for crimes against children;

(i) Strengthen the capacity of regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations and groupings to focus on the rights of children when negotiating ceasefires and peace agreements;

(j) Ensure that member States reaffirm their commitments to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol as well as the 1969 OAU Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa.

31. **Legal protection** of children outside situations of armed conflict and under foreign occupations is essential. For increased legal protection for children Governments should:

(a) Carry out comprehensive review of all legislation, with a special focus on personal and family law, to ensure conformity with the provisions of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Customary laws inconsistent with the interests of the child and the international norms governing the rights of the child should be eliminated or readapted;

(b) Develop child, youth and gender friendly inheritance and adoption laws in the States where adoption is permitted;

(c) Develop mechanisms for enforcement and monitoring of legislation; ensure that Children are educated on their rights; ensure easy access to legal protection; and introduce child friendly court systems and divergent systems for young offenders;

(d) Promote community and civil society organizations, participation in monitoring child rights abuses and reform reporting processes for such abuses;

(e) Strengthen structures for registration of births as soon as children are born, particularly in rural areas and among nomadic communities;

(f) Alleviate the humanitarian impact of sanctions regimes on children.

32. **Protection of children from violence, neglect, abuse and sexual exploitation** must be enhanced. Children shall be given increased protection against all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation. To ensure this, the following actions shall be carried out:

(a) Take urgent steps to eliminate child labour, in particular, the worst forms of child labour, as defined in the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 182. Those member States that have not ratified ILO Convention No. 182 should do so quickly and also put in place mechanisms for its implementation;

(b) Curb the growing phenomenon of child trafficking through prevention and protection measures for children as well as prosecution of traffickers. Put in place effective regional and bilateral agreements on border controls and handling of victims of child trafficking;

(c) Make use of the technical and financial cooperation provided by ILO, UNICEF and other international agencies in elaborating their programmes and policies against child labour;

(d) Protect children from all forms of violence and torture and take corrective measures to ensure that children are treated in a manner that respects their physical and mental integrity;

(e) Protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation through partnerships with civil society to promote safe homes, schools, neighbourhoods and communities. Establish alternative care systems for children without families;

(f) Sensitize children, families, care givers and the communities on the harmful consequences of sexual exploitation. Address factors like tourism, pornography, cultural and traditional practices which encourages sexual exploitation. Develop and implement programmes for the rehabilitation of victims of sexual abuse and exploitation;

(g) Eliminate all harmful traditional practices, which are detrimental to girls' and women's rights and health. Stop female genital mutilation and support initiatives for alternative methods for socialization. Stop early marriages and enact and enforce legislation on minimum marriage age for girls;

(h) Protect children from substance abuse by creating widespread awareness on their harmful effects as well as giving them life-coping skills. Enforce and monitor policies on illicit drug cultivation, production, trafficking and consumption, including prohibiting intoxicant solvents, psychotropic substance and tobacco advertising;

(i) Develop and implement programmes for and with children in need of special measures at the local, national and regional levels. Promote access to and inclusion in education, rehabilitation, cultural and recreational activities and the improvement of the physical environment.

VI. Participation of youth and children

33. The right of youth and children to participate, and to have their civil rights respected, is stipulated in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It should be enforced without delay.

34. Fulfilling the requirements of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child regarding participation rights requires the following actions by Governments, as the principal duty bearers:

(a) Enactment of necessary legal measures to ensure that children's views are taken into account on issues relevant to their interests;

(b) Legal reforms necessary to provide for public interest or social action litigation on behalf of children by interested groups;

(c) Special attention to the gender dimension of any legal reforms or substantive measures to promote participation;

(d) Strengthening of groups that represent youth and children;

(e) Facilitation of freedom of association and expression for youth and children, including the setting up, consolidating, broadening and strengthening children's parliaments;

(f) Support widespread child rights education, within traditional communities, among children and youth in schools and out of schools, at institutions of higher learning, within the media, police, armed forces and peace keepers, health providers, the judiciary and all State institutions from the local level to the national level;

(g) Support initiatives to increase understanding of African traditional values, practices and cultural perceptions of children in relation to child rights and children's participation in particular;

(h) Support the role of youth in peace-building, reconciliation and reconstruction, particularly in post-conflict situations;

(i) Facilitation of participation of youth and children in international forums concerning issues relevant to their interests;

(j) Networking, communications and information sharing among youth and children.

35. Youth participation is particularly relevant to the goal of reducing HIV infection among young people. Young people should be engaged in research concerning HIV and its social epidemiology, and in conceptualizing, designing, implementing and evaluating programmes to reduce HIV infection. The gender dimension of these activities needs special attention given the particular vulnerability of girls to HIV.

36. A commitment to an "Africa Fit for Children" in 2010 should truly reflect the stated concerns of Africa's youth and children, as manifested by their full participation in the review of the decade and the goals and strategies for the subsequent decade.

VII. Actions at all levels

37. We call for actions at all levels. Social mobilization shall be intensified so that all sections of society will be urged to take action for the well-being of children and the protection of their rights.

38. Strong partnerships shall be created with people's movements, youth movements, professional networks, artists, intellectuals, the mass media, the business community, women's groups, religious and traditional leaders, children, the military, adolescents and political leaders as well as civil society organizations in order to advocate for the rights of children and to tackle problems affecting them.

39. It is crucial and necessary to run child rights popularization programmes in all languages, including national languages.

40. Community participation, which seeks active and genuine involvement of the people, especially children and women, in the designing of policies and programmes for children and youth, shall be vigorously pursued.

41. Strengthen family units, revitalize the extended family to fulfil its traditional role and functions related to social reintegration and security, and reform adverse or harmful customary practices and biases, whilst promoting positive cultural and traditional practices that enhance moral and ethical values.

42. Governments should mobilize human and financial resources from private and public sources, reduce or rationalize military expenditures, re-focus national budgets and ensure their efficient utilization. Collaborate with economic and social development partners, international financial institutions, donor governments and regional economic communities for resource mobilization and provision of technical assistance.

43. Governments should advocate and negotiate with the international community and financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF for: debt cancellation; increased development aid; increased international trade and investment; and assistance in accelerating the growth of information communication technology as steps in reviving African economies, increasing the benefits of globalization and minimizing its negative impact.

44. Governments should contribute to the strengthening of research capacities on childhood through the establishment and/or consolidation of the research networks on childhood in Africa, with a view to develop close linkage between research, decision-taking and advocacy in favour of childhood in Africa.

45. OAU, as the continental body, should lead the way in promoting children's participation by organizing sessions in which children can participate and contribute. Specific initiatives include:

(a) The Youth against AIDS Network must be encouraged;

(b) Youth and children must participate fully in drawing up the OAU-Economic Commission for Africa-UNICEF annual and biannual continental reports on children and child-relevant issues;

(c) A study by OAU on who benefits from conflicts in Africa.

46. There is much to be learned from existing best practices within Africa, such as the role of parents and guardians. There are complementarities of experience between countries. Some countries have led the way in child protection initiatives (e.g., child-friendly courts), others in child participation programmes (e.g., children's parliaments), while others have set standards in providing for education and health care. These positive experiences should be shared, scaled up and reproduced.

VIII. International partnership: Africa Fit for Children

47. We call upon the international community to fulfil its commitment to assist in realizing the rights of the child in Africa. This obligation reflects historic and ongoing international responsibilities vis-à-vis the continent, and a common interest in the future of the African continent. The Convention on the Rights of the Child calls for international solidarity in realizing child rights. New, enhanced international development cooperation is required to make this aspiration a reality. We call upon all our international partners to give priority attention to the needs of African children by accelerating debt relief for poverty reduction; fully implementing the 20/20 Initiative in line with the Oslo and Hanoi consensus as well as the declaration of the World Summit on Social Development to ensure basic social services; and fulfilling the yet-to-be attained internationally agreed target of 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of developed countries for overall official development assistance as soon as possible.

48. **We call for a true partnership**. The complexity and ambition of the goals of the World Summit for Children and their dependence on factors such as resource flows, international action to overcome HIV/AIDS and progress towards regional peace and stability, means that all stakeholders need to be involved in partnership. African Governments, civil society, youth and children and the international community all have roles to play. The commitment to a revised set of goals must therefore be a collective one, with specific requirements on each partners. This partnership can only succeed if there is African ownership.

49. A true partnership also entails a high level commitment to work towards a global compact: Africa Fit for Children. Governments in partnership with civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations, should set goals, consistent with the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and provide mechanisms for accountability, such as regular, public, independent reviews of performance and outcomes conducted with the full participation of civil society, youth and children.

IX. Follow-up actions and monitoring

50. Each member State shall develop clear and realistic national plans with achievable goals, clear timetables with adequate resources by the end of year 2002. Member States are urged to review progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action on an annual basis, preferably before the OAU Labour and Social Affairs Commission meets.

51. Member States shall establish mechanisms for high-level political supervision and monitoring of the implementation of national programmes for and with children.

52. Participatory monitoring mechanisms should be established at the national level to allow communities, civil society organizations and children to monitor the programmes intended for children as well as child rights abuses and violations.

53. OAU and the Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in collaboration with the regional economic communities should monitor member States implementation of the Plan of Action, evaluate the performance in achieving the set goals and propose measures to be taken accordingly.

54. The special needs of African children need to be examined on a regular basis at the continental and regional levels along with transparent evaluations of progress towards meeting the commitments of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

55. OAU, in close collaboration with ECA and UNICEF, will produce a regular biennial report on the status of the African child. This report will evaluate the implementation of the commitments undertaken by Governments, and will examine the state of Africa's children in all dimensions. This assessment is particularly crucial now, in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and its impact on children.

56. To this end, OAU would consider holding special sessions for children every two years to review progress in implementing commitments to children's rights and welfare. OAU should also conduct a mid-term review of the progress achieved in the implementation of the Plan of Action in the year 2006.

57. In the light of this, every two years OAU in collaboration with ECA and UNICEF should jointly present a report at the OAU Summit focused on a specific issue relevant to children. Examples include trafficking in children, HIV/AIDS and child combatants.

58. Encourage the development of information systems at country level capable of generating data and the situation of the African child. This should be coordinated and managed by an observatory for the African child whose objective will, among other things, be to contribute to preparation of the above-mentioned reports.

59. Member States should use disaggregated data by geographical units and population groups to enable decision-makers understand data better and formulate appropriate decisions about children and their rights.

60. This Declaration and Plan of Action should be widely disseminated. It should be provided to schools and other educational institutions, together with copies of the summary of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child in local languages. Teachers and community leaders should be informed about the significance of this Declaration and Plan of Action so that they can better teach its contents and involve children and young people in pursuing strategies to monitor its implementation and to realize their rights.

X. Call to action

61. Africa's children deserve a better future. This must be based upon the realization of the rights of the child. This will be achieved only in the context of honest and self-critical appraisal of the record of the last eleven years, and realistic and principled commitments for the next decade. Anything less than this is a betrayal of the future of Africa.

62. **The time for action is now. Africa's children cannot wait.**

Annex

Evaluation of the last decade

1. All African countries with the exception of Somalia have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted in 1989. African countries led the way in acceding to the Convention, signalling a readiness at the highest level to undertake the obligation of realizing the rights of the child.

2. African countries adopted the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in July 1990, replicating and strengthening the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and ensuring that they are applicable to the situation of the child in Africa. The African Charter entered into force in November 1999.

3. At the September 1990 World Summit for Children Africa's leaders committed themselves to achieving a set of goals for children over the coming years (World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s). Seventeen African Heads of State and Government attended the Summit and a further 31 were represented.

4. At the time of the Summit, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child were not in force, and Governments were voluntary pledging themselves to work towards certain goals. Eleven years on, the question is different. It is one of compliance with the obligations laid down in these two instruments. We are entering a new era in which States' fulfilment of their obligations to the rights of the child can be assessed objectively.

5. In the World Summit for Children Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration, Africa's leaders committed themselves to the following overall goals to be met by 2000 (para. 5):

(a) Reduction of 1990 under-5 mortality rates by one third or to a level of 70 per 1,000 live births, whichever is the greater figure;

(b) Reduction of maternal mortality rates by half of 1990 levels;

(c) Reduction of severe and moderate malnutrition among under-5 children by one half of 1990 levels;

(d) Universal access to safe drinking water and to sanitary means of excreta disposal;

(e) Universal access to basic education and completion of primary education by at least 80 per cent of primary school age children;

(f) Reduction of the adult illiteracy rate to at least half its 1990 level, with emphasis on female literacy;

(g) Protection of children in especially difficult circumstances, particularly in situations of armed conflicts.

6. These goals were achievable. The world had, in 1990, and continued to possess during the following 11 years, the resources and mechanisms to achieve all of these goals in full. Eleven years on, we can assess the commitment and the current status of these goals objectively.

7. Overall, across Africa, these goals have not been achieved. There have been important gains in some countries and in some sectors, but setbacks in many countries in many sectors. The diversity of Africa's performance is a significant fact that must be recognized and incorporated into future programmes and policies. Overall, the lessons of the decade of the 1990s provide foundations for the countries in Africa in terms of what works and what requires major modifications in terms of strategy and approach in order to achieve these unfinished agenda.

8. In the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration, Africa's leaders committed themselves to the following national level follow-up actions (para. 34) (in summary):

(a) Prepare, before the end of 1991, national programmes of action to implement the commitments undertaken, including the participation of local governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and civic groups;

(b) Re-examine programmes and policies so as to accord higher priority to the well-being of children in general, so as to meet the major goals of the World Summit for Children;

(c) Re-examine national budgets to ensure that programmes aimed at achieving these goals have priority and are protected in times of economic austerity and structural adjustment;

(d) Families, communities and civil society should be encouraged to play an active role;

(e) Establish mechanisms for the regular and timely collection, analysis and publication of data required to monitor relevant social indicators, with particular attention to mechanisms to alert policy makers quickly to any adverse trends so as to enable timely corrective action;

(f) Examine current arrangements for responding to natural disasters and man-made calamities;

(g) Undertake further research and development to accelerate progress towards the goals of the Summit.

9. Once again, the record is disappointing. Substantial progress has been achieved in some countries and with regard to some issues, but not in other countries or with regard to other issues. Overall, the majority of these actions have not been undertaken by African Governments, or have been undertaken purely in a nominal way with little or no impact on resource allocation, policy-making or actions with relevance to children.

10. In the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration, international leaders and international organizations were requested to undertake the following international level follow-up actions (para. 35) (in summary):

(a) All international development agencies (multilateral, bilateral and non-governmental) should examine how they can contribute to the achievement of the goals of the World Summit for Children, and should report their plans and programmes before the end of 1991 and periodically thereafter;

(b) All regional institutions should consider the Commitment and Plan of Action with a view to developing agreements for collaboration in implementation;

(c) Full cooperation of all United Nations agencies and organs is requested;

(d) United Nations assistance is requested to institute appropriate mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of the Plan of Action;

(e) UNICEF is requested to prepare, in collaboration with others, a consolidated analysis of the plans and actions undertaken by individual countries and the international community in support of the child-related development goals of the 1990s.

In addition, paragraph 34 (iii) (see para. 8 (c) above) requires donor Governments to prioritize children in their assistance budgets.

11. Concerning regional and international actions on behalf of Africa's children, progress has again fallen well short of expectations. There has been significant progress in some areas (e.g., vaccination against poliomyelitis, increase in primary education enrolment in some countries) but these gains have been too few, and there has been a notable lack of concrete action on other priorities.

12. The record of implementing the World Summit for Children Plan of Action and achieving the World Declaration goals has been considerably poorer in Africa than in other regions of the world, in marked contrast to the enthusiastic participation of African leaders in the World Summit for Children and the alacrity with which African Governments acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

13. Some of the rights in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the goals in the World Declaration are implicitly or explicitly resource-dependent. But for some rights such as the right to education this is not the case. State parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child unconditionally and expressly commit themselves to immediate provision of universal free primary education. Education is not only a fundamental right but is the foundation of many other rights. Mother's education is the strongest determinant of child survival and development. Educational levels among a populace are the foundation for social and economic development and democracy and good governance. Currently, 60 million African children are estimated to be out of school, more than half the world's total. Education cannot be neglected or postponed.

14. Gender disparities in education and employment have narrowed but remain significant. Fortunately, sub-Saharan Africa has never suffered marked gender disparities in child survival. Serious discrimination and abuse against the girl child remains a serious concern. Particular areas needing attention include:

(a) The continuing lower rates of girls' enrolment in schools. This is not only an abuse in its own right but also has future implications for child survival, fertility rates and social development;

(b) The continuation of harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation;

(c) The high levels of HIV seropositivity among teenage girls;

(d) The scarcity of victim-friendly courts that address crimes specifically against women and children.

15. Child labour and trafficking in children has not declined. ILO estimates that there are 80 million child workers in Africa and this number is likely to rise to 100

million by 2015. Most of this work is underpaid and some of it is wholly unfree and unpaid, amounting to slavery. Trafficking in children continues in some of the poorest countries. More children than ever are exposed to violence and sexual abuse, including child prostitution.

16. Armed conflict has continued to plague the lives of children, killing, maiming and destroying childhoods. Africa has many child combatants. The proliferation of small arms has been one reason why children can be readily recruited into armed forces. Anti-personnel landmines cause a particular toll among children.

17. In 2001, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, there is no reason for complacency, let alone self-congratulation. We need to face the past and present with frankness and honesty.

18. This unfortunate record raises important questions about the rights of the child in Africa. Africa's children are entitled to ask the following questions of their leaders:

(a) Have unforeseen factors made it impossible to realize the goals set out at the World Summit for Children? (e.g., the HIV/AIDS pandemic);

(b) Have external factors outside the control of African Governments, but within the control of the international community, made it impossible to realize these goals? (e.g., declining aid levels, global economic crises);

(c) Have continuing conflicts and civil strife put child rights and actions for ensuring achievements of the time-bound goals in jeopardy?

(d) Have natural disasters such as floods, cyclones and droughts contributed to further deterioration of the situation of children in affected countries, and has Africa not been able to foresee and prepare itself to face these disasters effectively?

(e) Have African Governments themselves not been sufficiently determined in implementing the World Summit for Children Plan of Action? Have corruption and poor governance stood in the way of progress?

(f) Were African leaders sincerely committed to the World Summit for Children Plan of Action when they made their commitment, and did they genuinely commit themselves to realizing the provisions of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

19. We surmise that elements of all these factors are to be found, in varying degrees, as reasons for the non-achievement of the World Declaration aims and the non-implementation of the World Summit for Children Plan of Action in full.

20. The socio-economic crisis in Africa has been very severe on the traditional African structure for taking care of the child through the wider family including the community. The crisis has created extreme pressure on the family, in many instances leading to family break-up through death, migration, and other social stresses. These factors also contribute to the break-up of communities. One of the basic rights of the child is to have a good start in life: to grow up in a nurturing and safe environment that promotes physical, mental and emotional growth along with social competence and readiness to learn. These are all strong features of traditional African families and child-rearing practices; but they are threatened by the continent's social and economic crises. As we go about building a child-friendly Africa, we need to start with the family.

21. The issue of child trafficking and child labour reflects a profound crisis of the family. These abuses are related to the inability of the poorest households to provide for themselves. The reconstitution of the family, beginning with the empowerment of women and policies that cater for the poorest of the poor are key to this agenda. Policy makers should go back to the African mother's kitchen.

22. Globalization is simultaneously opening horizons for Africa's most favoured children and limiting the life chances of the poor. In a globalized economy, education and technical skills are the key to success. Africa must invest in its children if it is to compete globally and to achieve economic development. Rehabilitating Africa's educational systems is an imperative for the continent's future.

23. Africa's traditional cultures place children at the centre and provide for nurturance within a strong network of family and kin. But aspects of traditional cultures also disadvantage children and youth: there are some harmful traditional practices (e.g., female genital mutilation), many customary legal systems discriminate against women and children, and young people are excluded from participation in society's decision-making. Africa needs to acknowledge and promote what is best in its cultures, and reform what is no longer appropriate.

24. Rapid urbanization has disrupted traditional cultures and placed children in new environments. Old assumptions about family networks and socialization may no longer hold true in this context. The more formal, legal framework provided by the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child is therefore ever-more relevant.

25. Today's social and economic crises have radically changed the world-views and life expectations of Africa's youth. Previous life-trajectories from childhood to adulthood have changed. Many of Africa's young people face the future with a profound sense of uncertainty and foreboding. HIV/AIDS is just one of many dangers that threatens to make their lives shorter, more uncertain and less fulfilling than their parents'. There is a continent-wide need to create an environment in which young people are able to face the future with confidence and hope, and thereby participate in their societies in a positive manner.

26. The uneven progress in fulfilling the 1990 commitments also raises questions about the monitoring and assessment mechanisms appended to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Have these mechanisms been adequately utiiized? Have state parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child submitted their reports on time? What measures have been taken against those that have failed to comply with this, the most basic requirement? What assessments have been made of progress?

27. The record is once again, mixed. A start has been made in monitoring, and in particular the unique provision in the mandate of the Committee for the Rights of the Child, allowing for non-governmental organizations to participate in the mechanism, represents an important step forward. But the monitoring mechanism has been largely toothless.

28. The continuing prevalence of armed conflict in Africa is a major cause for the abuse of children's rights. The protection of children during conflict receives inadequate attention in the World Summit for Children World Declaration and Plan of Action. In the last decade, much experience has been gained concerning the

protection of children in conflict, which needs to be reflected in future international agreements concerning children.

29. Furthermore, although the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child contains clear and explicit commitments to respect the rights of children to participate in decisions concerning their welfare, and to the freedoms of expression, conscience and association, goals and mechanisms for the realization of these important rights are not found in either the World Declaration or Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children. There has been some progress (e.g., children's parliaments in some countries), but children and youth remain marginalized. Child participation rights warrant greater attention in future.

30. The World Summit for Children goals were a commitment by national leaders. They have expired, although they remain a framework for assessing performance. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the other hand, are formal legal commitments by States. The legal obligations contained within them do not expire and remain as valid and binding today as when the instruments were first ratified. Present and future national and international policies must be anchored in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Accordingly, we call upon all States members of OAU that have not signed and ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, to do so as a matter of urgency.

United Nations A/S-27/5

General Assembly

Distr.: General
9 July 2001
English
Original: French

Twenty-seventh special session

Letter dated 26 June 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In preparation for the special session of the General Assembly on Children, to be held at United Nations Headquarters, New York, from 19 to 21 September 2001, Morocco has organized a number of forums and conferences to contribute to this important session.

They include:

The Arab Regional Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organizations' Forum on Children held in Rabat from 15 to 19 February 2001;

The Summit of African First Ladies held in Marrakesh from 20 to 22 April 2001 on the topic "The girl child: a global movement";

The Arab-African Conference of Ministers of Finance, organized in Marrakesh from 21 to 22 May 2001 on the topic "Resources and financing to advance the cause of children".

In this connection, I have the honour to request you to have the following documents circulated as documents of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly:

The Marrakesh Declaration — Summit of African First Ladies (Annex I);

The general report of the Summit of African First Ladies (Annex II);

The report of the Arab-African Conference of Ministers of Finance (Annex III);

The Declaration of the Rabat Non-Governmental Organizations' Forum (Annex IV).

(*Signed*) Mohamed **Bennouna**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

01-45518 (E) 080801 210801

Annexes to the letter dated 26 June 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Annex I

[Original: French]

Marrakesh Declaration
Summit of African First Ladies

The Girl Child: a Global Movement

We, the African first ladies participating in the First Summit of First Ladies, focusing on the girl child, meeting in Marrakesh from 20 to 22 April 2001,

Considering that the recognition of human rights and their effective exercise constitutes the cornerstone of all sustainable human development,

Recognizing that the rights of the girl child and of women form an integral and inseparable part of the inherent rights of all human beings to dignity, and hence necessitate equality of rights between men and women,

Recalling the conclusions and recommendations of the major international conferences dealing with women's rights, population, education, social development, combating poverty, the environment, the promotion of peace and the establishment of a culture of non-violence,

Recalling the whole body of international instruments, including the Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which constitute the foundation of the survival, advancement and development of children in general and of the girl child in particular,

Sharing the new vision of the twenty-first century for a world worthy of children, as provided in the draft declaration of the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on Children scheduled for September 2001,

Recalling all Africa's achievements and gains in favour of women, the girl child and children in general,

Paying tribute to the cooperation and collaboration that prevails among the African countries in a new approach of family, inter-generational, national, regional and international solidarity while respecting the identities and cultural specificities inherent in each people, which in no way calls in question the recognized universality of human rights,

We, the first ladies of Africa, are convinced that the changing face of the world and its balances in the era of globalization, which admittedly has advantages, is causing for the African countries, particularly the least developed, only an increase in disparities and a deepening of the rifts in society:

We are also convinced that Africa, being at the heart of the economic, social and cultural changes in the world, cannot remain isolated from this new dynamics.

We, the first ladies, undertake to defend:

The development, protection and recognition of the rights of the girl child in Africa within the context of a global movement for the development of Africa which calls for:

Ceaseless advocacy and sensitization of political decision makers, officials and all those working on behalf of children;

Eradication of all forms of gender-based discrimination, whether de jure or de facto;

Global mobilization for development and the spread of education and campaign against illiteracy, of which the girl child is the first victim; increased effort to facilitate access by girls to high-quality education;

Guaranteed equality of access to health care, and promotion and reproductive health to permit greater awareness of and protection against the HIV/AIDS pandemic;

Strengthening of all legislative, educational, social, cultural and information activities and efforts to eradicate sexual abuse and traditional practices that

impair the physical and moral integrity of the girl child, including genital mutilation;

Combating violence within the family, of which women and girl children are the first targets;

Education in respect for and promotion of human rights by encouraging the inclusion of this dimension in school curricula and in informal education programmes so as to establish a culture of the rights of the child;

Combating the employment of and trafficking in girl children and their enlistment in armies;

Development of economic and social development programmes and projects for women by facilitating access to income-generating activities, thus freeing the girl child from the work burden that impedes her school attendance and development;

Major involvement of the media in advocacy for children;

Strengthening of the partnership with non-governmental organizations and all components of civil society in favour of children;

Involvement of the private sector and of national, regional and international financial institutions with a view to reconsidering their development financing strategies in order to guarantee the rights of the child, by attaching prime importance to debt reconversion, or even debt cancellation in the case of the least developed countries, to giving effect to the 20/20 initiative and to better resource allocation in favour of social programmes for children;

The eradication of poverty and the establishment of peace;

Ongoing efforts to maintain the peace and ensure the development of human rights in Africa;

Lastly, we, the first ladies of Africa, remain convinced that the eradication of poverty starts first with children;

We, the first ladies of Africa, consider the present Summit to be a historic moment and the issue of the girl child to be the cornerstone of a worldwide movement for the development of Africa and of a world fit for children. We undertake to ensure follow-up of the Declaration of the Marrakesh Summit through an appropriate mechanism.

Annex II

[Original: French]

General report of the Summit of African First Ladies

"The girl child: a global movement for the development of Africa"

Marrakesh, 20-22 April 2001

Under the high patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, the city of Marrakesh hosted an unprecedented summit of African first ladies from 20 to 22 April 2001. The discussion focused on the girl child in the context of a global movement for African development.

The Summit, which was attended by a large number of African first ladies, was opened by an address given by Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Meryem, "the children's princess". Her Royal Highness is President of the Moroccan Association for the support of UNICEF and of the National Child Rights Monitoring Centre, has made the best interests of children her primary concern and has concentrated all her efforts to ensure the full enjoyment by all Moroccan children of their rights.

Paying tribute to the first ladies of Africa and to the tireless efforts of UNICEF on behalf of African girl children, Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Meryem recalled the interest accorded by her august father, His Late Majesty Hassan II, an advocate for the rights of the child. Following his father's example, His Majesty King Mohammed VI had, since his enthronement, made the cause of children a national priority. A national commission bringing together all the national authorities of Morocco, both the governmental authorities and associations, the presidency of which had been conferred on His Royal Highness Prince Moulay Rachid, was engaged on the development of a national plan of action on behalf of children in the forthcoming decade. Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Meryem mentioned the historical significance of the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations in September 2001 devoted to children which would be an essential platform for advocacy in support of "a world fit for children".

Highlighting the efforts made by African countries to promote the survival, development, protection and participation of children in general, and of the girl child in particular, Her Royal Highness drew attention to the difficulties that hampered concerted action in Africa on behalf of children, difficulties which continued to be mainly economic and financial, with indebtedness as the first obstacle.

Recalling the historical dimension of the Summit, Her Royal Highness pointed out that "all of us wish to contribute to improving the living conditions of our children", and to achieve that through mutual competition between all the vital elements of the African countries. Her Royal Highness emphasized the importance of the ongoing exchange of mutual experience in order to find appropriate solutions and take up the challenge of the next decade: advancement of the status of African girl children.

In their statements, the eminent African first ladies paid tribute to that initiative which they fully endorsed, and highlighted the attention that should be paid to African girl children as the future depositaries of values and in view of their role in the upbringing of the young people.

The distinguished presentations made emphasized that the beliefs common to all participants encountered social, educational, cultural and, above all, economic difficulties.

In reviewing the efforts made by their respective countries, the first ladies addressed the following basic question: how can the imperatives of macroeconomic balance, that are imposed by the various structural adjustment plans and give rise to major shortfalls at the level of basic social sectors, be reconciled with the more effective allocation of resources for the benefit of social programmes, particularly those aimed at children?

All the first ladies remained convinced that the upbringing of girl children made possible the upbringing of the entire nation and that emphasis

should therefore be placed on that educational dimension as an indispensable precondition for any sustainable social change.

The distinguished first ladies made a firm commitment to engage in advocacy and to promote awareness, at the highest level and in all forums for the benefit of girl children, by motivating financial institutions by calling on them to assume their responsibilities with respect to the survival, development, protection and participation of children in general and of the girl child in particular.

A lively feature of the work of the Summit of African First Ladies was the holding of two round tables, respectively: "Assessment of the situation of the girl child in Africa" and "Reflection on solutions and measures to ensure the advancement of the girl child".

"Assessment of the situation of the girl child in Africa"

The round table on the assessment of the situation of the girl child in Africa was introduced and moderated by Ms. Zoulikha Nasri, Adviser to His Majesty King Mohammed VI. She underlined the unfailing and long-standing commitment of Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Meryem to children in general and to girl children in particular. Ms. Zoulikha Nasri recalled that Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Meryem had chaired the first symposium of the Maghreb countries on the question of the girl child in May 1991 in Casablanca. During the symposium, Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Meryem had highlighted the special precariousness of the situation of girl children which was bound up with discriminatory attitudes towards them.

A glowing tribute was paid to Her Royal Highness for having presided over an unprecedented campaign against the shameful exploitation of children in employment. That campaign had called on all the vital elements of the country to strive to ensure acceptable living conditions and opportunities for development for girl children who were arbitrarily employed as domestic servants. All over Africa, girl children from rural areas, from which such servant girls came, suffered the greatest loss of their fundamental rights because of the geographical, economic and cultural conditions in which they were born and grew up.

What is the situation today?

Ms. Zoulikha Nasri recalled the statement by the late James Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF, which unfortunately still applied, to the effect that far more boys than girls learned to read and write in the developing world, that in certain countries twice as many boys as girls were taken to health centres for treatment and that it was unacceptable that the right to work, the right to social protection, the legal status, the right to own property, and even the civil and political liberties of individuals, should depend upon a single chromosome.

Eminent panellists — Ms. Agnès Aïdoo and Ms. Aïssata Moumouni, consultants, and Ms. Misiak Elias, the representative of UNICEF in Jordan — helped to outline the status of the girl child in the world in general and in Africa in particular.

They emphasized the youthfulness of the old continent of Africa, the cradle of humanity, over 50 per cent of whose population currently comprised children under the age of 18. Over and beyond differences between countries, the status of the girl child in Africa was still characterized by features that were detrimental to their dignity and development. Despite the progress achieved, the situation still fell short of the hopes of a continent that aspired to fulfil its commitments to all its children.

Among those commitments, it must be borne in mind that almost all African countries had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and had thus officially endorsed the principles of non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the guarantee of the right to survival, to development and protection, and the right to participation.

The main concerns with respect to the situation of the girl child in Africa were the following:

The endemic poverty maintained by debt-servicing which consumed a major part of GNP;

The shortage of infrastructures, in particular, school infrastructures;

The preference of parents for the education of boys;

The poverty associated with food taboos which gave rise to anaemia affecting between 75 and 95 per cent of girls aged over 15 years;

The survival of traditional attitudes and discriminatory social perceptions;

Early and forced marriages and pregnancies which sometimes threatened their lives and were always detrimental to their physical and intellectual development;

Dropping out of school as a result of such marriages and pregnancies;

The irreparable and marginalizing after-effects and handicaps which also resulted from such early marriages and pregnancies;

HIV/AIDS which affected girls more than boys because of their greater biological vulnerability;

Acts of violence from which girls suffered specifically: genital mutilations and mass rape during armed conflicts, which was now considered by the United Nations as a crime against humanity;

The burdens of child labour and domestic responsibilities which were borne by girl children in addition to their frequently being employed in domestic service;

Finally, child trafficking, including trafficking in girl children leading to their enrolment in prostitution rings.

It was also to be noted that the participation of girls and women in public life remained very limited, in contrast to their economic role.

The question of girl children was that of the very future of Africa. What kind of legacy did we wish to leave to Africa? It was the girl children of today who would bring up the leaders of tomorrow.

All the panellists agreed to emphasize that education was fundamental to enhancing the status of the girl child. Only education would enable them:

To manage their fecundity more effectively;

To contribute to lowering child mortality; and

To take more effective charge of their lives and that of their families.

The generalization of education must, however, go hand in hand with an improvement in its quality.

There were, however, some glimmers of hope to offset the depressing picture given by the panellists of the situation of the girl child. Mention must be made of one positive achievement for Africa. The strong mobilization of African Governments and non-governmental organizations had done much to ensure that the question of the girl child was given prominence in the Beijing Platform for Action. Similarly, in September 2001, at the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on children, the question of the girl child was to be given priority in the outcome document: "A world fit for children". The Summit of First Ladies was to be regarded as a historic event and the question of the girl child as the cornerstone of a global movement for Africa.

"Reflection on courses of action and measures to ensure the advancement of the girl child in Africa"

A round table on courses of action and measures to ensure the advancement of the girl child in Africa was moderated by Ms. Rima Salah, Regional Director for West and Central Africa. Ms. Aïcha Belarbi, Ms. Aïcha Bah Diallo and Changu Mannathoko also contributed as participants to the successful discussion.

The most fruitful statements and discussions during the round table concerned the analysis of the situation of girl children. Numerous courses of action, measures and recommendations were proposed in response to the highly complex issues raised by the situation of African girl children, as set out below.

For an environment conducive to the advancement of the girl child

Establishment of a global development strategy to make the African continent part of a new long-term human development process capable of responding to public expectations and making the advancement of women and the girl child a major priority;

Consolidation of democratic institutions and strengthening of human rights which were the essential preconditions for the development and implementation of the rights of women and girl children;

Construction and preservation of peace through the peaceful settlement of conflicts, conflict prevention and the establishment of political and institutional conditions advocating coexistence, tolerance, dialogue and the culture of peace;

Revival of, and efforts to give effect to, the proposal made by His Late Majesty King Hassan II to adopt a "Marshall Plan" for the all-round development of Africa;

Militating on behalf of debt cancellation and the conversion of debt to investment in social sectors;

Providing for the effective and appropriate mobilization of financial resources for all social development initiatives;

Ensuring the effective implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;

Taking the gender dimension into account in the development all national policies and programmes;

Taking substantial measures to guarantee the rights of women which were inseparably linked with those of children, and of the girl child in particular;

Making decision makers and the public aware of the rights of the child, and particularly the rights of girl children and women;

Creating national observatories for children's rights which would form a network facilitating coordination and the development of an African strategy for children;

Promoting action-oriented research on girl children and their rights in order to make an impact on reactionary attitudes and mind;

Establishment of national data banks broken down according to sex and age which would enable decision makers to devise and develop strategies on behalf of the girl child;

Establishment of a committee for following-up and evaluating the recommendations of the Summit which would serve to support the advocacy of the African first ladies who would appoint a focal point for girl children in their respective countries and ensure the preparation of an annual report;

Organization of major campaigns to promote awareness of the rights of girl children and women using the positive values of African culture to popularize the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Specific measures to promote the rights of the girl child

Ensuring the harmonization of legislative texts in accordance with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;

Ensuring the participation of children, particularly girl children, in any decision-making process concerning their rights;

Mobilizing non-governmental organizations on behalf of children, particularly girl children, by establishing a firm partnership between the public authorities, civil society and local communities;

Involving the modern media and traditional channels of communication in the general mobilization on behalf of girl children and women, and projecting a positive image of them;

Promoting the access of women to decision-making positions as a means of expediting the effective implementation of commitments made;

Making decision makers and the public aware of questions of the rights of women, children and particularly girl children;

Ensuring that education becomes the top priority and that all parties involved (public authorities, civil society, local authorities, the community, development partners) act in partnership with respect to political, family and community matters and educational systems;

Making the access of all children to school the first priority by ensuring parity at the school enrolment stage and equality between the sexes in all cycles of education and training;

Integration of non-formal education as a means of combating dropping out of school;

Encouragement for the promotion and development of pre-school education;

Giving a positive image of girl children and women in school textbooks and syllabuses;

Training of male and particularly female teachers in rural areas who are a major role model for girl children, as well as all people who interact with girl children (health personnel, law officers, and so forth);

Providing teachers with training materials to enable them to eradicate the sexist values which prevail in our schools;

Developing innovative approaches to the education of girls based on the improved adaptation of schools to their environment, close attention to the needs of children and the involvement of parents in the running of schools;

Promoting the awareness of fathers and mothers so that they provide an equitable upbringing for their children by giving boys and girls the same degree of attention;

Ensuring the access of all children to health services through the generalization of vaccination, timely screening, the effective prevention of certain diseases and access to basic health care;

Ensuring balanced nutrition for girl children by investing in the struggle against poverty and against food taboos to eliminate malnutrition-related diseases and disabilities;

Ensuring that the public authorities give particular attention to disabled girl children, and promoting public awareness in order to counter their marginalization;

Strengthening health education in school curriculums including primary health care, reproductive health, sexually transmitted diseases and specifically AIDS;

Criminalization of the intentional transmission of AIDS;

Ensuring that the specific needs of adolescent girls are taken into account in the design and implementation of development programmes and strategies;

Creation of employment for young graduates;

Protecting children against economic exploitation by adopting national legislation consistent with international labour standards and providing for penalties to ensure the effective implementation of such legislation;

Ensuring continuous protection for children by the international community in conflict areas while paying particular attention to the situation of girl children;

Enactment of strong legislation to ensure the protection of girl children against all forms of violence, including physical abuse, forced and early marriage, sexual harassment and sexual abuse, including paedophilia and genital mutilation;

Drafting and ensuring compliance with legislation to protect girl children, particularly those in domestic service, against abuse by employers;

Combating child trafficking at the international level while ensuring the effective implementation of the recommendations made at major conferences and the funding of repatriation and reintegration programmes for the child victims of such trafficking.

There will be no possibility of putting all these measures and recommendations into effect, so that they have a global and positive impact, unless globalization is made more humane, thereby avoiding any increase in the current economic and social imbalance between countries.

Annex III

[Original: French]

Report of the Arab-African Conference of Ministers of Finance preparatory to the special session of the General Assembly for follow-up to the World Summit for Children, September 2001

(Marrakesh, 21-23 May 2001)

1. The Kingdom of Morocco and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) held an Arab-African Conference of Ministers of Finance in Marrakesh from 21 to 23 May 2001. The theme of the Conference was "Resources and financing to advance the cause of children".

2. This event was held in preparation for the forthcoming special session of the United Nations General Assembly on children, to be held in New York from 19 to 21 September 2001, and in response to General Assembly resolution 54/93 of December 1999, particularly its paragraph 15, which "invites Governments and relevant organizations, in particular the United Nations Children's Fund, as well as regional and subregional organizations, to undertake reviews of progress achieved since the World Summit for Children, and encourages appropriate national, regional and international preparatory activities with a view to contributing to the preparations for the special session and building partnerships for and with children".

3. The Conference was presided over by His Majesty King Mohammed VI and was attended by Mr. Blaise Compaoré, President of the Republic of Burkina Faso; Mr. Cassam Uteem, President of the Republic of Mauritius; and Mr. Koumba Yala, President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

4. The following countries took part in the Conference: Algeria, Angola, Bahrain, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Niger, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

5. Canada, Norway and the United States of America participated as observers.

6. Also taking part in the Conference were Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of UNICEF, and representatives of the following United Nations agencies and programmes, international organizations and international and regional financial institutions: World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), African Development Bank (AfDB), Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (ABEDA), Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD), Arab Monetary Fund (AMF), Saudi Development Fund (SDF) and Arab Gulf Programme for the United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND).

7. The Moroccan private and banking sectors, local authorities and non-governmental organizations contributed actively to the work of the Conference.

8. The aims of the Conference were to analyse the priorities to be set for children in Africa and the Arab world; to consider the resources, particularly financial resources, needed to guarantee the full implementation of the various commitments undertaken for the survival, development, participation and protection of children and the promotion of their rights; and to join forces to put the Global Movement for Children into practice by mobilizing additional resources and implementing innovative financing mechanisms in priority areas for Arab and African children.

9. This Conference, which, from the outset, represented a follow-up to the Arab Civil Society Forum (Rabat, 15-19 February 2001) and the Summit of African First Ladies (Marrakesh, 20-22 April 2001), made it possible to assemble, around the same table, all actors concerned with the situation of children (Governments, local authorities, the private sector, United Nations agencies, associations, regional and international financial institutions, etc.) for the purpose of considering together how to close the gap between the ambitious undertakings contained in the various legal and political instruments relating to children and the increasingly manifest scarcity of financial resources earmarked for their implementation.

10. Motivated by the desire to join the determined effort to build a world fit for children — a world of peace, stability, socio-economic development, prosperity, tolerance and justice — the participants drew up a series of practical recommendations and specific proposals to enrich and encourage constructive debate at the various round table discussions to be held at the General Assembly's special session on children. They also expressed their conviction that the attainment of the goals established for the coming decade would depend on the elaboration of an action-oriented, proactive, innovative strategy, in a spirit of solidarity, to mobilize additional financial resources, particularly for sub-Saharan Africa.

11. The work of the Conference was enhanced by the effective presidency of His Majesty King Mohammed VI at the opening meeting and by the important opening address given by Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Meryem.

12. Her Royal Highness, while reiterating the unwavering and resolute commitment of the Kingdom of Morocco to working with the other Arab and African countries to improve the situation of children in those countries, stressed that the mobilization of additional financial resources to advance the cause of children demanded a strong political will on the part of Governments to incorporate funding for programmes and projects to benefit children into their budget planning and implementation policies.

13. Moreover, those efforts must draw upon the contributions of all the partners concerned, including the Governments of countries all over the world that had close relations with the Arab and African countries, as well as international organizations, specialized agencies, regional institutions and national and local associations; in sum, all the components of civil society, particularly non-governmental organizations active in that field.

14. Her Royal Highness concluded that, while democracy had become a yardstick for assessing the quality of relations at the national and international levels, advocacy for children remained the most meaningful measure of the humanitarian spirit.

15. The Presidents of Burkina Faso, the Republic of Mauritius and Guinea-Bissau delivered important statements at this opening meeting, in which they lauded Morocco's efforts to help vulnerable groups in society, including children, and praised the many initiatives taken by the Kingdom to facilitate the preparations for the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly on children.

16. Mr. Blaise Compaoré, President of Burkina Faso, stressed that the great strides made in developing countries since the World Summit for Children had nevertheless fallen short of the expectations of the Arab and African countries.

17. In his statement, Mr. Cassam Uteem, President of the Republic of Mauritius, used the successful experience of his country to highlight the very positive socio-economic benefits of investment in children, and called on the international community to continue to support the sustained efforts of countries that had made progress to ensure that their gains were preserved.

18. The President of Guinea-Bissau, Mr. Koumba Yala, called on the African countries to set aside the mentality of violence and war in favour of dialogue and tolerance. In relation to the situation of children in Palestine, he urged the international community to put a stop to the crimes committed by Israel against Palestinian children in the occupied territories.

19. The work of the Conference was structured around the following three topics:

- Assessment of the situation of children in Africa and the Arab world and priority-setting for policies to promote the well-being of children in those regions;
- Financing and governance;
- Financing and partnership.

20. In addition, a "brainstorming" group open to all participants and a non-governmental organizations' forum enriched the work of the Conference by making a number of proposals and recommendations.

21. Prior to the various plenary meetings of the Conference, Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of UNICEF, read out a message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations in which the latter recalled that, despite the progress made in the protection of children, many children were still deprived of basic education, access to health care and proper nutrition. Each year, more than 10 million children died of preventable diseases such as measles and diarrhoea. The commitments undertaken by Governments to promote the rights of the child were not yet reflected in the structuring of national budgets or in economic policy reforms.

I. Assessment of the situation of children in Africa and the Arab world and priority-setting for policies to promote the well-being of children in those regions

22. Ten years after the World Summit for Children, which culminated in the adoption of a Declaration and Plan of Action on the survival, protection and development of children, undeniable progress has been made in Africa and the Arab world, particularly in terms of immunization (with remarkable success in the fight against polio), promotion of breastfeeding and reduction of diarrhoeal diseases, malnutrition and deficiency diseases. This has contributed to a drastic reduction in the under-five mortality rate in the Arab world and Africa. In the 1990s, significant advances were also made in basic education, particularly for girls, and led to reduced illiteracy rates.

23. Nonetheless, the progress made over the past decade cannot overshadow the many obstacles that continue to block the attainment of the goals of the Summit and even the setbacks experienced in a number of African countries and some Arab countries with respect to certain basic indicators of child well-being. These obstacles are due, inter alia, to the resurgence of armed conflicts, rampant poverty, the external debt burden, inadequate access to developed-country markets, the substantial decline in official development assistance (which stands at 0.24 per cent of gross national product (GNP), well below the target of 0.7 per cent set by the United Nations more than 30 years ago), the steady erosion of the terms of trade for certain commodities, insufficient political will and the effect of rapid demographic growth coupled with generally slow economic growth.

24. The sectors which have lagged behind the most are, in particular, access to health care, to better nutrition and to high-quality basic education for all children; the fight against malaria; and new problems such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, violence against children, discrimination against women and girls, the effects of armed conflict and of the displacement of children within their own country, refugee children, transboundary trafficking in children and their sexual exploitation and recruitment into prostitution, pornography and drug trafficking networks and the illegal immigration of children.

25. In Africa, the HIV/AIDS pandemic causes more deaths than any other disease; 15 million people on the African continent have died of AIDS since the beginning of the 1980s. Young Africans account for nearly all of the 10.4 million children under the age of 15 who have been orphaned by this pandemic, which has reduced life expectancy to 40 years in some African countries. All the studies and surveys conducted in this area show that ignorance among young people and lack of sex education and awareness-raising are the primary reasons for the continued spread of this pandemic.

26. In the area of immunization, the results achieved are still uneven. In the Middle East and North Africa, the regional average immunization rate for children under the age of five is 84 per cent; in sub-Saharan Africa it is 48 per cent, and the rates in 15 countries are still lower than this average. The under-five mortality rate is 173 per thousand in sub-Saharan Africa and 63 per thousand in the Middle East and North Africa.

27. With regard to nutrition and the control of deficiency diseases, the regional average for children under the age of five suffering from delayed growth is about 40 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and about 25 per cent in the Middle East and North Africa region. The situation in respect of iodine and vitamin A deficiency is even more alarming.

28. Malnutrition and nutritional deficiencies have tragic consequences for the intellectual development and school performance of the child.

29. With regard to education, many children are still being denied this fundamental right, particularly girls

and children living in difficult circumstances. In sub-Saharan Africa, the net rate of primary school enrolment is 51 per cent for girls, compared with 59 per cent for boys. In the Middle East and North African region, these figures are 77 per cent and 85 per cent respectively. Access to universal, high-quality basic education is still problematic and must be elevated to the level of a national emergency.

30. Children continue to be victims of various forms of violence, ranging from forced enlistment in armed conflicts (Africa has had more than 30 wars since 1970) to landmines scattered throughout the region (44 million in Africa, some dating back to the Second World War).

31. At the same time, the effects of population displacements, particularly as a result of conflicts, inevitably lead to the separation of children from their families, which makes them vulnerable to being enlisted and recruited by militias.

32. Furthermore, the participants strongly denounced the fierce and inhuman repression against Palestinian children and use of armed force by Israel, in violation of the humanitarian conventions on the protection of civilian populations in occupied territories, and called upon the international community to condemn these acts.

33. The war waged by Israel against the Palestinian civilian population, and the crimes perpetrated against children in particular, illustrate Israel's lack of respect for children's right to life and constitute a challenge to the universal conscience and a total violation of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

34. The participants also made an urgent appeal for the lifting of the embargo imposed on the Iraqi people, the main consequence of which is the serious malnutrition suffered by Iraqi children and numerous diseases causing the death of thousands of children.

35. Alongside the concerns which cannot be addressed within the narrow framework of this Conference, it is imperative to set priorities with a view to the formation of a new vision to guide the international community towards a "world fit for children", particularly in Africa and in the Arab world.

36. These priorities may be summarized as follows:

- A general mobilization of all actors to combat the resurgence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, involving children and particularly adolescents in the design of programmes for prevention, awareness-raising, advocacy and education, which are indisputably the best line of defence;
- An integrated approach to ensure a good start in life for infants, comprising, inter alia, universal immunization against the major infant and child diseases, improved nutrition, and the promotion of the integrated management of childhood diseases;
- Universal access to high-quality basic education, particularly for girls;
- Better protection for children in difficult circumstances, particularly children in conflict with the law (through the development of juvenile justice), street children, working children, refugee children, child victims of armed conflicts and economic sanctions, children with disabilities, child victims of abuse and discrimination, etc.

II. Financing and governance

37. The realization of the economic, social and cultural rights of the child is not only an ethical imperative but also an investment, with positive economic effects which have an unquestionable impact on sustainable human development.

38. Good governance requires the establishment of a democracy which is concerned about promoting human rights and consolidating justice as a means of strengthening social cohesion and equity.

39. Aware of the still precarious situation of Arab and African children, the Conference participants recognized the need to achieve significant progress in mobilizing additional resources for the benefit of children and making better use of available resources (governance).

40. The participants noted that national budgets are the main and constant source of financing for child-oriented policies. Foreign aid represents only 2 to 8 per cent of budgetary expenditure allocated to social sectors.

41. The participants also recognized that the format of national budgets does not give a precise idea of the allocations for children or of the trends of such

allocations. There was consensus, however, about the need to further increase the budgetary allocations to children.

42. They also felt that institutional measures to protect the interests of children are often weak. Each governmental agency or department executes its programmes and projects separately, often without any coordination.

43. Studies have also shown that policies to benefit children would have much to gain not only from increased resources, but also from a better utilization of existing resources.

44. The participants stressed:

- The importance of allocating resources at appropriate stages in the life cycle, particularly from conception to early infancy;
- The need for actions to benefit children to be more firmly anchored at the local level;
- The value of a decentralization and deconcentration of public services which may not only help maximize the efficiency of public expenditure but also generate considerable potential for innovative initiatives by local communities through better neighbourhood services;
- The importance of a more participatory approach involving civil society in view of the many advantages in terms of efficiency, transparency and appreciation of the actual impact of expenditure devoted to children.

III. Financing and partnership

45. In this era of globalization, characterized by a stagnation of public resources allocated to development, the participants believed that the challenge of financing the cause of children requires not only the rationalization and optimalization of national budgets but also the mobilization of additional financial resources from all economic agencies, particularly through the encouragement of decentralized actions which optimize local resources and skills.

46. New sources for financing the cause of children therefore need to be found among non-governmental organizations, the private sector and local actors. It should be possible for public action in favour of children to be taken over by decentralized development actors who could also receive public budgetary resources under specific conditions.

47. The rich and varied debate on the experiences reported by economic agencies, municipalities, non-governmental organizations and international organizations brought out the following points:

- The similarity of the diagnoses made and solutions proposed concerning children;
- The importance of respect for ethical rules and transparency in all actions undertaken for the benefit of children, on which there is strong consensus;
- The adoption and implementation of precise norms and operating rules in order to strengthen the professionalism required for the efficiency of all actions to benefit children;
- The need for strong political will and clear options in support of genuine community participation along with an effective policy of deconcentration and decentralization, delegating a central role to municipalities;
- The promotion of a strategy of delegating tasks to local actors in order to ensure continuity and credibility;
- The importance and effectiveness of mobilizing relevant sources of action for the benefit of the child, such as the initiative by mayors in support of the rights of the child and action by parliamentarians, socio-professional organizations and microcredit bodies, as demonstrated by the experience reported;
- Better adaptation of new projects to specific local needs, which requires organized and well-targeted research, hence the need to envisage establishing a regional research centre for the Arab and African world connected to a network of local research units;
- The need to ensure better coordination between the various agencies of the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions as well as the more expeditious choice and implementation of projects.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations of the Conference

48. The recommendations and conclusions of the Conference focused on the following main areas:

49.1. **According higher priority to children in national budgets**

(a) To establish a "national committee for children" which would be a viable option and an effective and efficient lobby to protect the best interests of children in the budgetary process. The committee would comprise government representatives, parliamentarians representing different political parties, members of civil society, academic institutions, the private sector, children themselves and UNICEF.

Bearing in mind the specific characteristics of each country, the committee would have the following functions:

- To advise the public authorities on the reallocation of accounts and budgets for children, taking into consideration the interests of children and international recommendations;
- To conduct studies on the impact of budgetary decisions concerning investments in the sphere of children, as well as periodic evaluations of policies undertaken for the benefit of children;
- To strive for greater coherence and efficiency in the management of additional funds generated by voluntary efforts and the initiatives of the private sector and economic operators;
- To prepare a periodic report on progress made in matters related to children, to be submitted to the legislature and the general public;
- To make proposals on the allocation of funds to priority projects for the benefit of children, including the monitoring of their impact.

In addition to these institutional functions, the Committee could play a significant role by promoting a participatory and affirmative approach of society at the level of both decision-making and the generation of proposals.

(b) Making an accurate analysis of expenditures through an integrated and cross-sectional approach to the question of children.

(c) Giving greater attention in national budgets to the protection, participation and rehabilitation of children.

(d) According the utmost importance to high-quality basic education in national budgets, in particular in the field of pre-school education.

49.2. **Effective and transparent utilization of available resources**

(a) Taking institutional measures designed to ensure the sustainability of action on behalf of children, providing conditions to ensure their effectiveness on a participatory basis and improving the cost-effectiveness of the use of resources allocated to programmes concerning children.

(b) Designing and developing tools for evaluating the impact of governmental policies on children, inter alia, through a "statistical watch".

(c) Creating "national accounts for children" in order to assess the financial outlay on behalf of children and evaluate achievements and measures planned to translate their rights and needs into practical action.

49.3. **Towards a partnership involving public authorities/private sector/local authorities/NGOs for the mobilization and utilization of financial resources**

(a) Integrating approaches and programmes relating to children and promoting partnerships between government, civil society and the private sector with a view to increasing the availability of resources for programmes devoted to children.

(b) Encouraging a decentralized partnership with a greater role being given to local authorities to promote neighbourhood management of children's issues in keeping with overall efforts to achieve decentralization.

(c) Calling on all parties involved to mobilize resources to be invested in the advancement of children. Synergies and complementarity should be sought to make possible direct financing by national and international donors of the activities of NGOs and of civil society.

(d) Delegating the design and implementation of certain projects relating to children to a greater

extent to actors in direct contact with the actual situation on the ground.

(e) Enhancing the institutional framework of NGOs in order to strengthen their role and encourage them to serve as a major public sector link for the benefit of children, in particular through four priority actions:

- The definition and adoption of specifications for working standards for such associations (prudential management rules, certification of accounts, reviewing skills and performance).
- The establishment of a statute for social workers and efforts to find long-term solutions for the payment of their remuneration.
- The creation of NGO networks for the benefit of children which would act as catalyst and a source of fresh ideas.
- The promotion of new formulas for the direct funding of NGOs by international, financial, multilateral or regional organizations, or institutional or private donors.
- The enhancement of their skills in needs identification, activity scheduling, project management, monitoring and evaluation.

(f) Encouraging the private sector, banks and enterprises, on a voluntary and unregulated basis, to conclude master contracts, through associations representing them, with NGOs that are organized and recognized for their contribution to improving the living condition of children. Such master contracts would serve as a model for specific contracts to be signed between the enterprises and child protection associations. Action undertaken on behalf of children would thus be ongoing, rather than sporadic and unfocused.

(g) Calling on financial markets, as part of the broadening of private sources of finance, to assist through the creation of ethical funds, or collectively managed funds, provided by the widest possible range of investors.

(h) Involving and empowering target communities as a further means of ensuring not only the efficiency of the action undertaken on behalf of children but also greater interest on the part of private sources of funding. In that connection, local authorities, as bodies representing the public, have a fundamental role to play in improving the living conditions of children. It will be necessary to make elected officials more aware and give them the necessary knowledge and skills to become familiar with the situation of children in their commune, to play a part in the implementation of legislative measures relating to children, and to establish and give effect to participatory communal development plans on behalf of children.

(i) Establishing, in accordance with a proposal by the Summit of African First Ladies (Marrakesh, 20-22 April 2001), an Arab-African observatory for the rights of the child which, in addition to statistical, sociological, economic and other research on children, would manage, in conjunction with UNICEF, a solidarity fund for Africa which should be able to attract additional funds from the industrialized countries as well.

(j) Building partnerships both within and between communes aimed at generating additional resources in collaboration with non-governmental organizations.

(k) Promoting microcredit as a tool for funding revenue-generating activities, in particular for women.

49.4. **Activating South/South cooperation and triangular cooperation**

(a) Encouraging South/South cooperation and sharing experiences and good practice in the field of child protection and inviting countries that are in a position to do so to assist the poor countries of Africa and the Arab world to address their enormous needs.

(b) Calling on international and regional bodies and developed donor countries to support triangular cooperation by allocating additional resources to it and by helping to identify needs and the means of meeting them.

(c) Promoting more effective Arab-African solidarity.

(d) Envisaging the creation of regional Arab-African networks of parties active in child-related fields.

49.5. **For promotion of greater commitment in international cooperation**

(a) The developed countries should honour their frequently repeated commitment to devote 0.7 per

cent of their GNP to official development aid, ensuring that 20 per cent of those resources are allocated to basic social services.

(b) The developing countries are invited, within the framework of the 20/20 initiative, to devote 20 per cent of their budgetary resources to basic social services.

(c) The international community is invited to give careful consideration to an approach similar to the 20/20 initiative specifically focusing on children.

(d) The international community is called on to strengthen mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of conflicts so that the countries that are thus freed from security constraints will decide to reduce their military expenditure and allocate the available resources to the social sectors.

(e) The eligibility qualifications for the heavily indebted poor countries initiative should be relaxed in order to enable all countries involved to benefit under less restrictive conditions, particularly the least developed countries.

(f) The creditor countries are invited totally to cancel the public debt owed to them by the least developed countries.

(g) The establishment of a multilateral trading system that is fair, equitable and more open to the goods and services of the developing countries would provide a means of generating additional resources estimated at $100 billion per annum. Such resources would be used to finance development objectives, in particular the priorities for the benefit of children.

(h) The donor countries and international financial institutions are invited to promote concessional loans in favour of the middle-income developing countries intended for social services.

(i) The creditor countries are invited to restructure part of their debts as social investments in the developing countries.

(j) The promotion of coordination between agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations and the international financial institutions, while taking into consideration specific national and regional features in the formulation and implementation of the various programmes and projects for the benefit of children.

(k) Taking into account the conclusions of the meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, and of the forthcoming international conference on the financing of development.

A major feature of the closing meeting was the address by Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Meryem in which she stated that the recommendations and proposals adopted by the conference demonstrated that the proceedings would have a positive impact on the special session of the United Nations General Assembly the following September, adding that it was incumbent on participants, through an act of firm political will, to ensure the implementation of what had been agreed on for the benefit of children so as to combat all the hardships, and their adverse social impact, which children unfortunately still had to face in many Arab and African countries.

Her Royal Highness made a point of conveying the indignation of the Kingdom of Morocco, shared by all participants at the conference and by the entire international community, at the plight of Palestinian children who faced the systematic aggression of the Israeli war machine in violation of all recognized international treaties.

She also expressed the hope that the blockade imposed on Iraqi children, from which they suffered on a daily basis, would be lifted as soon as possible.

Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Meryem concluded by conveying to participants the appreciation and greetings of His Majesty King Mohammed VI and of His Royal Highness Prince Moulay Rachid, President of the National Commission responsible for preparing for the United Nations special session devoted to children.

Annex IV

[Original: Arabic]

Arab Regional Civil Society Forum on Children
Rabat, 15-19 February 2001

Rabat Declaration

The countries of the world having assembled more than one decade ago at the World Summit for Children, which adopted the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for its implementation in the 1990s,

The Arab States having committed themselves, as part of the international community, to the World Declaration and Plan of Action and having pledged to implement their provisions and espouse their principles in order to create better conditions for children, now and in the future,

The Convention on the Rights of the Child having sought to protect children in the areas of health and education and to enhance standards of child care within the family in an environment of well-being and stability that is free of all bigotry and hate and protects children from the calamities of violence, murder and war,

The commitments given by the governments of the Arab world having placed upon them the responsibility of taking the necessary initiatives and measures to facilitate the implementation of the Convention in the spirit required and of adopting effective programmes to change the situation in which children find themselves and provide them with the opportunity to live in a fitting world that is free of discrimination,

The organizations of civil society having played an important intellectual, organizational and monitoring role in matters relating to the implementation of the Convention in the spirit intended, in exhorting, prompting and pressuring political leaders, governments, the private sector and parliaments to adopt strategies for enhancing the situation of children and to develop suitable procedures and enact legislation for that purpose, and in coordinating their joint action at the regional and international levels,

The future of children being dependent on the realization of their hope to live in a world that is worthy of them and receptive to their views and capacities and to their strong and generous aspirations as citizens with rights and with a say, thus requiring them to be brought into political, economic and social decision-making,

And the survival and development of children, as a human and moral endeavour and the duty and responsibility of all and sundry, necessitating as it does the promotion of partnerships, the establishment of inter-country relations among non-governmental organizations and the utilization of all available human and financial resources to strengthen the economic policies that relate to programmes for children in all fields with a view to reducing disparities and eliminating the scourge of poverty so as to achieve a new world order that benefits children and replace a world order that aggravates the hardships of children and accelerates their demise,

Accordingly,

The inter-Arab and regional non-governmental organizations and civil society entities meeting in Rabat from 15 to 19 February 2001 at the invitation of the Arab Council for Childhood and Development, the Arab Institute for Human Rights, Morocco's National Child Rights Monitoring Centre and the United Nations Children's Fund hereby affirm:

That they shall strive, in coordination and in partnership and in the best interests of children throughout the world and in the Arab World in particular, to employ their efforts, their expertise and all their capacities in order to give effect to the values enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child as the very minimum on which their will accords with that of the international community;

That they shall urge all regional and international organizations as well as States, governments and leaders throughout the world to adhere meticulously to

the Convention and to formulate economic and development policies to benefit children and their lives for the sake of their safety and dignity in full equality while sheltered from war, blockade and disease;

That they shall, with firm conviction, make the participation of children a central goal, given that the only way to build the future of children is through them and with them;

That they shall spare no effort to urge Arab governments to discharge the duty of recognizing and protecting the rights of children, adolescents and young persons, providing all the resources and instrumentalities necessary for their education and responding to their needs and, for this purpose, to bring their national legislation into conformity with the spirit and substance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to ratify all the human rights instruments and withdraw their reservations, to expand the scope of basic freedoms and to respect opposing views in a democratic manner and within a State founded on law and justice;

That they shall renew their commitment to strive for the lifting of blockades and boycotts and shall urge a halt to wars, conflicts and occupation and the elimination of their devastating impact on child victims in Palestine, Iraq, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, the occupied Golan Heights and elsewhere.

United Nations A/S-27/6

General Assembly

Distr.: General
14 August 2001

Original: English

Twenty-seventh special session

Letter dated 13 August 2001 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the Petra Declaration, adopted by the Third Ministerial Meeting of the Human Security Network, held in Petra, Jordan, from 10 to 12 May 2001 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex issued as a document of the special session of the General Assembly on children, to be held in New York from 19 to 21 September 2001.

(*Signed*) Cristián **Maquieira**
Ambassador
Deputy Permanent Representative

01-51061 (E) 210801

Annex to the letter dated 13 August 2001 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Petra Declaration

Statement of the Human Security Network to the special session of the General Assembly on children

We the members of the Human Security Network reaffirm our commitment to continue to work toward promoting the rights and protection of children affected by violence and armed conflict. We are committed to carry these vital human security issues forward into the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children (19 - 21 September 2001).

Recognising the important outcomes of recent international conferences including the West African Conference on War-Affected Children in Ghana, the International Conference on War-Affected Children in Canada, the EU Seminar on Children affected by armed conflict and forced displacement in Sweden, and the Middle East and North Africa Regional Conference on the Use of Child Soldiers in Amman, as well as recent discussions and initiatives undertaken in support of war affected children at the UN Security Council.

Members of the Human Security Network underscore the importance of the rights-based approach in the Special Session on Children and are committed to an outcome rooted in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its four cross-cutting principles of non-discrimination; child survival and development; the best interests of the child; and child and youth participation.

Members of the Human Security Network highlight the importance of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, and pledge to undertake all efforts to ensure early ratification and implementation, including setting the highest possible standards in relation to voluntary recruitment and the necessary safeguards and to work together as a community to promote the universal ratification of the Optional Protocol. In order to ensure the reduction of impunity against children being recruited and used in conflicts, the members of the Human Security Network also call for the ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the ILO Convention 182 on the Prohibition and the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

Recognising the importance of a comprehensive approach to the complex needs of war-affected children, particularly with regard to internally displaced and refugee children, members of the Human Security Network agree to work within the Special Session on Children to promote measures that address the following priorities for action:

- Provision, or restoration of access to educational and vocational opportunities for girls and boys and youth before, during and post-conflict;
- Promotion and provision of awareness and consciousness raising activities on children in war-affected areas;
- Promotion and facilitation of active participation of women and children in the decision-making process of peace building;
- Unhindered access of humanitarian personnel to children in complex emergencies, including psycho-social support, immunization campaigns and other services;

- Reduction of health problems exacerbated by armed conflict, in particular malnutrition, disease and the spread of HIV/AIDS;
- Effective disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation of child combatants and reunification with their families and reintegration into their communities;
- Reduction of the devastating impact of small arms and landmines on children;
- Strengthening of mechanisms for monitoring and reporting of children's rights in situations of armed conflict, to increase accountability and to end impunity for those who violate the rights of children.

Members of the Human Security Network also recognise the importance of follow up to the Declaration and the Agenda for Action against commercial sexual exploitation of children, as adopted by the First World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation held in August 1996, and to the Second World Congress to be held in December 2001.

We, therefore, welcome the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, and we underscore the importance of early access to medical, psycho-social and other support services for children who are, or have been victims to sexual exploitation and effective actions to combat the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography.